

FROM THE MAELSTROM

Lionel Hambro's Murderer

ONE October evening I entered, not a little unexcitedly, my friend Hogg Tredways' sitting room in Half Moon street. An evening paper was crumpled in my hand. It was wet, for I had been reading it under a street lamp, and a torrent of rain was booming off the pavements.

"Here's an astonishing thing!" I blurted abruptly.

Tredways, writing, lifted a protesting palm. I felt checked, and edged toward the immense fire. My friend's pen scratched its way for three or four lines, then stopped.

"So, so," he grunted contentedly. "I have just completed the introduction to my book on those bizarre, those roquent, those earth-burrowing fraternities called in popular language 'secret societies.' The police imagine they have learned them out and up. But not to dig deep enough is to press them further down! I shall call my book 'The Nether Steeps,' and—ah, you have something to tell me?"

"I should say! That man Hambro is out!"

"Out from where?"

"From Chains."

"Good God! Escaped?"

"Actually. The seventh man ever known to do the trick. Look here."

I helped myself to one of his cigars and watched him; Hogg Tredways, the foremost criminologist of his generation; his brain a picture gallery of faces of men of the underworld, his mind a compendium of the art of law-breaking in its multifarious phases.

Just a word of explanation. The Rev. Horace Francie, the chaplain of the prison called Chains, once chanced the observation that doubtless some inmates of that and sister establishments passed into it guiltless, suffered there crimes which were not upon their souls. Now the chaplain was myself. To me Tredways had said, "Suppose you send such cases to me upon their legal discharge? I have not studied this subject for decades for nothing. I might snell out a clue and save them—save them from all that innocent men endure when they climb out from the prison gulfs." Hard? Very. But Tredways was—well, Tredways.

Now Stacey Hambro was a case in point. Only instead of being legally discharged he had, as you see, brought off one of those rare bolts for liberty which sometimes succeeded for a while at least.

"Doesn't tell us much," commented my companion, handing me the paper. "How did he do it, do you think?"

"I cannot say yet. It was probably from the laundry. Today is washing day in his lot. He was one of the 'soap-suds' gang. There are two big windows to the laundry; one of them gives upon a leaded roof with a rain-pipe down to the ground. It must have been a truly desperate effort."

"The desperation of an innocent man?"

"He fiercely upheld his innocence from the dock until now, two years after. I know for a fact, as I mentioned to you, Tredways, that he had spent those two years in evolving a theory which should meet the facts and clear him."

"And he had perfected that theory?"

"I gathered that he had. He once said to me, in an undermutter, that if he could free himself for twenty-four hours he would be able to prove himself guiltless of the murder charge which smashed him."

"He ought not to have made that remark to you, Francie. You are too soft-hearted. You will end by getting the sack." Tredways chuckled. "I wonder if he ever heard of me?" he added.

"Yes, he did once mention your name. Your reputation is older than two mere years. But I sternly discouraged such observation, needless to say, and with any other man I should have felt compelled to report him."

My friend regarded me with a rigid fixity.

"Why," he exclaimed with truly daring inspiration, "it is even on the cards that he might come to me?"

At that moment the bell below trilled long, loud, insistent!

"Hush!" said Tredways, raising his right hand and leaning forward. We stared at each other with wide-dilated eyes. His idea was idiotic, of course; it was only the heat of his imagination which had fired mine; and while I was urging myself not to be foolish we heard a step upon the stair, the sound of a man's unhesitating step, and a firm knock at the door.

"Come in, Hambro," called out my companion in a loud, clear tone.

The shock of astonishment which I got when the door opened vibrates every time I recall it. Was the man Stacey Hambro? Yes, indeed. Tredways' extraordinary belief had in a

measure prepared me for that; but it was the visitor's appearance which deprived me of speech and motion.

As Hambro stepped over the threshold we heard the sound of his taxicab rolling away. He was clad in evening dress covered by a light fawn coat; his pumps and gloves left nothing for desire, and a monocle adorned his right eye. To hide his cropped head he kept his crush hat on. And as he was a fine figure of a man, and very handsome, all this became him exceedingly.

"Yes," said he in his deep, powerful voice, answering Tredways' invitation, "that is my name. I have the privilege of addressing Mr. Hogg Tredways, I believe? Thank God for that. I have passed through much for this hour's sake." Then he turned to me with a bow. "Good evening, chaplain," said he as cool as you please. "You always showed me kindness as far as you could. I throw myself on your mercy now, on your compassion. I want an hour or two more of liberty; after that do with me as you choose."

"I will not waste time in explaining how I come to be here in these conditions, in this fashion," went on Hambro, as Tredways turned to him. "I escaped because I willed it. The details are immaterial at present. I took refuge with a wealthy friend at —, but his name and place of residence I cannot, of course, mention. These clothes are his clothes. He brought me to London in his car. There is only one way to meet a situation of that kind, and it is the way of audacity. Yet it can only save me for a brief time. Mr. Tredways, I am a perfectly innocent man. I have lived for two years in torture for this hour of freedom. Send me back, gentlemen, you will and you must; I ask first that you will listen to me."

"Turn the key in the door, Francie, and pull the curtains over the blind," said Tredways blandly, while I choked.

"The killing of my cousin, Lionel Hambro, is a mystery for all to scan, but there was a previous mystery in his life which is not common knowledge," commenced the visitor, leaning forward with hands clasped between his knees. "I know who killed him—now; and that his end was linked up with that lesser known secret of his life was long a part of my theory of the case. That was an error. There was no connection. But I will speak of both."

"Five years ago my cousin Lionel vanished in the most absolute fashion. Six months after his disappearance the death of a relative made him heir to a very considerable property. If he was to die childless that property would pass to me. It was this feature in the case which provided the motive of my supposed crime; a powerful motive, an undisputed incitement."

"Lionel vanished. That caused no sensation, and for the simple reason that he sent a brief line to a Miss Madie Frere, an American lady, in her own country, informing her that he was going away for a long time. This brusque message Miss Frere sent across to me, but I could throw no light upon it. Lionel loved her sincerely, devotedly; and yet he did not tell her where he was going, or why he was going, nor when he would return. It seemed as heartless as it was mysterious. In those few words to her he had imparted, without seeming to want to do so, a note of strange farewell, a suggestion of serious trouble, even of despair. Lionel disappeared and left no trace. Three years passed."

"Suddenly he came back. His return was more extraordinary than his departure. Three days later he was murdered."

Tredways held up an interrupting palm. He said:

"Let me get this clear—your theory, which we are going to hear, has no link binding it with your cousin's vanishing?"

"No."

"Was Lionel a man of good repute—a good liver?"

"He must have been, or Miss Frere would never have given him her heart."

"But what is your own opinion?"

"I saw so little of him. He spent most of his time in the Bohemian city of Prague."

"Indeed? What did he do in Prague?"

"I believe he had a business there."

"Did he ever tell you what it was?"

"No. I sometimes fancied he was reckless on the subject."

"Go on."

"Lionel returned from nowhere, in queer circumstances. It was as bad a night as this. I heard a smashing off of glass. Some one had tried to get into a first-floor window by a workman's ladder left there. He had slipped and fallen through the conservatory roof, cutting himself a good deal. The moment I saw him, lying there in a huddled heap some

extraordinary intuition flashed the truth upon me. This was the more surprising because he had come back in rags—tatters, saturated to the skin with rain. I called my man servant, Kellman—I am going to speak of him particularly later on—who fetched a lamp. I turned the light on the white face at our feet. It was emaciated, the hair prematurely gray, but I recognized my poor cousin, as I was sure I should. He opened his eyes and fixed them on me with a wild, with a most imploring expression. I exclaimed—"Good God! Lionel! Is it really you?"

"He gave me a wan smile, nodded, then fainted. With Kellman's aid I carried him to my bedroom. During that short journey I reflected that since my cousin had visited the house in this secretive, this stealthy fashion, which so became the mystery that surrounded him, it might be politic to respect his wish not to be seen and talked about. So I requested Kellman to keep his tongue still. This was to prove a fatal piece of evidence against me."

"Directly I saw Lionel in the full electric light I felt that he was dying. Not that he had received any serious hurt from his tumble; but his wasted body, the fever that burned in him, his exhausted breathing, told their eloquent tale. With Kellman's help I got off his wretched clothes and put him into my own bed. I had a telephone in the house and I promptly rang up my doctor. He arrived and pronounced the case almost hopeless. He said, 'He is on fire with fever, and it will burn out his candle within twenty-four hours.'"

"When I heard that I saw the expediency of taking the medical man into my confidence. Naturally, he was astonished. He said, 'You may have some difficulty in proving it. It may be a good thing for you that you called me. Doubtless you recognize him, but have you any other evidence?' 'Yes, he answered to his name, and my servant Kellman was a witness to that,' I replied. 'That is something,' said the doctor. 'But had you not better search these rags of clothes?'"

"Together we acted on the suggestion. We discovered a pathetic testimony to the truth. In his coat pocket we found the last letter he had received from his fiancée."

"And his left hand?" he asked.

Our visitor showed bewilderment.

"Did you notice his left hand?" repeated Tredways.

"I cannot say that I did," was the surprised response.

"All right. Continue."

"The doctor went, but promised to look in again in an hour or two. I spent the interval by Lionel's side. As his temperature climbed up and up he became so violent in his delirium that I called in Kellman to assist me in a sheer physical control of the patient. More than once during that painful interval I caught my servant looking fixedly at me in a stealthy, sidewise fashion. He was aware that there was a life between me and a fortune, and that this life was ebbing as we watched it."

"How did he know as much?" Tredways questioned.

"He was in the room when the doctor and I talked."

"Then of course he knew. Well?"

"My cousin's struggles gradually ceased; the incoherent expressions on his lips died away into long sighs. He was dying. The doctor did not appear. I hoped fervently that he would come and that by administering one of those forceful injections which make a fading spark leap into flame he would give a few lucid seconds to my cousin in which he could explain the mystery of his strange vanishing and his more extraordinary re-appearance; in which he could give me a few words of farewell to the woman whose heart he had almost broken by his inexplicable conduct."

"At an early hour before midnight the doctor came. He bent over the patient who was then perfectly still. 'Good God!' he cried. 'This man is going to pull through!'"

"At those words some inclination drew my eyes toward Kellman, who was folding the wretched garments that lay in a pile on the floor. He was regarding me with a cunning expression that seemed to worm its way to the middle of my soul. Despite my efforts to show perfect composure I felt my face grow pale. I am but human and I am not rich. A great fortune which had just been extended toward me was abruptly jerked back. But I controlled that ignoble emotion the instant of its birth. 'I am glad to hear it, doctor,' I answered. 'Look at him!' said he, 'in a bath of perspiration. He will sleep for hours and may wake—refreshed. All depends on the unknown factor called his constitution.'"

"In the morning I knew that my cousin Lionel would live."



"It was not possible to hedge round the secrecy of his visit any longer. My one and earnest desire was to have light on the point. Any questioning was strictly forbidden for a couple of days at least on account of the exceeding prostration. It was during that interval that Kellman had the insolence, the audacity to mutter to me some word expressive of his sympathy in the disappointment which he evidently believed was gnawing me. I immediately gave him a week's notice in which to leave my employ. His presence irritated me more than I can say."

"On the morning of the third day after Lionel's strange coming he was found dead in his bed!"

"My medical man was uneasy. I saw suspicion in his eyes, heard it in his voice. There was an autopsy. It revealed the presence of tincture of opium. Some one had mixed the laudanum with the medicine. My cousin had been murdered."

"I was arrested. The motive for the charge was not glaring, but that could not have damned me. Unluckily, on the day following my cousin's appearance I had sent for some tincture of opium. True, it was not the first time, for I had acquired the bad habit of taking a few drops at times. That helped me at the trial, but not enough. Then my doctor did his best. I think he could not bring himself to believe in my guilt. I received the capital sentence, which was afterward commuted to penal servitude for life. I have no quarrel with it, but by God I can no longer endure."

Our visitor clenched his hands together. They shook. His whole body shook. He stared into the fire with heated, with protruding eyes.

Tredways said curtly, "Was the phial of laudanum in the room?"

"Yes; in a cupboard."

"Was your cousin able to rise and find it?"

"He was weaker than a baby."

"Did you purchase it yourself?"

"No. I sent Kellman for it, as I always did."

"Where was the room?"

"On the ground floor."

"It was fairly easy of entry?"

"Yes."

"You have worked out a theory. You feel that you know, now, who killed Lionel Hambro. Who was it?"

"Kellman murdered him."

Tredways nodded. "I should like more detail regarding your cousin before he took himself off so strangely. His vaguely-mentioned business in Prague, now. Why his reticence in alluding to it? Have you any idea of your own?"

"I often suspected that it had no existence."

"So do I," Tredways wheeled his

chair away from his visitor and looked into the fire. "Tell me why you fix on Kellman," said he.

"I will. No one knew of the drug but Kellman. I have recalled a hundred times those strange, searching, stealthy looks of his when my cousin came. More plainly than words they said, 'This feeble spark of life is all between you and a splendid property. Would you not like it to go out?' And he put it out. If you bar Kellman there is absolutely no one else on whom to place the guilt. His motive ostensibly was one of blackmail, or, possibly a handsome secret sum paid by me to him later on."

"Exactly," agreed Tredways. "But there is a weak link in your theory. Kellman does not seem to have been prepared for the aftercharge of murder?"

"Why, he never dreamed there would be such a charge. He believed my cousin's death would be ascribed to sudden relapse following upon great exhaustion."

"Ah, true. Now when you searched your relative's pockets did you find anything else besides that love-letter and that ring?"

"Nothing whatever."

"No matter how small?"

"No, there—the only other thing we turned out was a circular piece of yellow sticking plaster, that is all."

To my amazement Tredways bounded from his chair. "All!" he cried. "What was the size of that piece of adhesive plaster?"

"About the size of half a crown."

"You are sure it was yellow?"

"I think it was, but the detail made little impression."

Tredways resumed his seat after this queer outburst. For a quarter of an hour no word was spoken. The situation for me was packed with embarrassment. There was I sitting in the presence of a man whom it was my duty instantly to hand over to the police. He took not the least notice of me, but sat immovable, his gloom-filled eyes boring into space.

The silence was broken by a grunt of discontent from Tredways.

"Look here, Hambro," said he irritably. "If I cannot help you, what do you propose doing?"

"But can't you help me?" pleaded the other huskily.

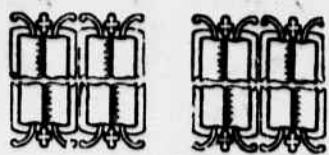
"How is it possible? Just ask yourself. Supposing that you are right, how can we corner Kellman after two years?"

"I thought we might go to him. My abrupt appearance might force—"

"Tut, tut. That man's no fool."

Silence again, and a longer spell of it. My embarrassment increased. If the fugitive was found there with a charge

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The Third of a Series of Complete Stories by L. J. Beeston.



that you made, from the very beginning of this extraordinary case, a profound error. I do not believe that the man who was undoubtedly murdered was your cousin Lionel at all."

The fugitive from justice started as if struck. "Not Lionel?" he echoed. "No, I feel not. I think he was just merely some poor nameless devil of a tramp, horribly hungry, or very ill, who tried to force a way into your house."

"Impossible. He said he was Lionel," burst out the other.

"I disagree. He said nothing of the sort. You asked him if he was, and he made a murmur or sign of assent. Of course he did. That was to avoid being charged with housebreaking. Despite his condition he kept his wits together."

"But—but I recognized him!" stammered Hambro.

"I disagree again. You plainly said that you had seen very little of your cousin. Now since he had been left that great property you had naturally thought about him a great deal. He had vanished utterly. Was he dead? Would he ever come back? Vital questioning for you who were separated from a fine fortune by this one mysterious life. You dreamed Lionel. You took him with your meals. You were already prepared possibly for a queer return as his disappearance had been. And when that nameless wretch fell into your conservatory the thought of your relative rushed into your mind. Besides, you said he had cut himself with the glass, and blood from his face would assist rather than check your imaginative recognition. Also very possibly some likeness did exist."

"At this juncture I cut in with—'Wrong, Tredways. You have forgotten the love letter and the ring with the lock of hair.'"

"Which the poor fellow knew nothing about," was the cool answer. "They were put where they were found in order that he might seem to be Lionel Hambro without doubt; in order that when dead—for at that time he was believed to be dying—he might be buried under that name. Yet he did not die a natural death, for he was murdered. Who murdered him? Some single member of a secret society of miscreants having its headquarters in the city of Prague, which is famous for that sort of vermin."

"That Lionel Hambro was once connected with such a fraternity I feel certain. His mysterious doings in that city might be a poor argument; a much stronger is afforded by that abrupt farewell of his to society. Remember, Francie, that I know something of those rodents, those earth-burrowing brotherhoods. There was one rooted out three months back called 'The Upas.' When one of themselves deserted or, realizing the more than doubtful methods of the fraternity, attempted to give information to the authorities, they did two things to him: They fired a pistol ball through the center of his left hand, making a clean hole there by way of brand; and they sentenced him to lasting banishment from every lane of life in which he had moved. The condemned had to cut adrift from every one he had known and to leave his country for good. Any attempt at return was met by death."

"I believe that Lionel Hambro suffered this sentence. It fits the facts. He vanished without a word of explanation save that brief line of good-bye to his fiancée. Suddenly, in the person of this unknown derelict, he seemed to have turned up. The thing was talked about. Doubtless the medical man chatted of it a good deal. It swiftly reached the ears of Lionel's enemies, one of whom was naturally nearby on the watch that Lionel should not return to claim his fortune. This emissary struck. He entered the sick man's room. There was no need for violence. He found the phial of tincture of opium, and he used it. He worked in the dark, remember. He had no proper sight of the patient, but then he had no reason to doubt."

"But the letter in his pocket; the ring; the lock of hair?" I persisted. "Who put them there?"

"At that instant we heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs. Hambro rose to his feet, very white, the fear of capture staring out of his eyes. But Tredways went on, very steadily: 'Who put them there? Kellman did. Now another reason why I am sure the murdered man was not Lionel Hambro is because the disfigurement of a hole in the middle of his left hand was not noticed, and simply because it was not there. If it had been it must have been observed. Now that Lionel was so branded I have sure proof. What might a man do who was so marked and who particularly wished to conceal the place? He would fill the orifice with a piece of wool which he would cover with a circular piece of yellow—flesh-colored—sticking plaster.' 'And such a fragment was found in his pocket!' I burst out. 'Precisely. It was rubbed off accidentally from the very hurried hand which placed the letter and ring there. The owner of that hand was

Lionel Hambro; and unless I am deplorably mistaken—"Tredways stepped to the door and flung it open—"here is the gentleman!"

"Kellman!" cried Stacey in the gasping tone of a strangling man. The man who entered became as motionless as if transformed to marble. He fixed on the fugitive a look of heart-stopping astonishment.

"One and the same," said Tredways blandly. "Slightly disguised so that you should never recognize him, my poor friend. Good evening to you, Mr. Lionel Hambro. If you will be so good as to remove that short beard, those eyebrows and to show us your left palm? Thank you. My case is complete, gentlemen."

"In persuading Stacey Hambro to give himself up to the police," said my friend as we re-entered his rooms an hour later, "you did the only possible thing. But I feel pretty confident that we shall clear him before many days. Twenty minutes to midnight. It's late. Hadn't you better go, Francie?"

"When I have asked you one or two questions, yes."

He yawned and stirred the fire.

"How did you know that Kellman was Lionel Hambro?"

"Some one had put those things in the pocket where they were found. Who was there to do it save Kellman? Stacey had made him out so mysterious a customer. There was depth in him, I felt sure. He put them in during the minute when Stacey was outside in the hall,

flinging up the doctor. He believed at that time that the man was surely dying. He wanted his enemies to think that their victim was under ground. The idea was good, you will allow."

"But after his banishment why did he run the big and strange risk of becoming a manservant to his cousin?"

"It was a wily move, believe me. Do you remember Poe's story of the purloined letter which no one could find because it was all the time openly in view in a letter rack on a mantelpiece? The same idea. Lionel came to the last place where he would have been considered likely to show himself. His disguise did the rest. But his greatest reason was that he wanted to be near to Maudie Frere."

"Who is still in America, however."

"Fiddlesticks. I have little doubt that she is the supposed 'sister' with whom he resides. I expect they are man and wife. She passes as sister in order to allay possible suspicion of the Upas. She must have been back some time. Of course she knows all. She has been a splendid friend."

"I cannot agree. She should have made him declare himself openly."

"Pardon; you do not know the Upas—more deadly than a maleficent cancer of the worst kind."

"That is all very fine, but Lionel Hambro let his cousin go to prison for killing a man who was never dead."

"Delightfully put! But you err, Francie, you err. There cannot be the smallest doubt that Lionel believed that

his cousin did administer that fatal dose of laudanum. He did not penetrate as deeply into the riddle as we. Indeed, to him it was no riddle at all. It was simply that his relative had put an end to a man who he thought was between him and a great property. If Lionel had revealed himself afterward it could scarcely have helped his cousin, since killing is killing; while it would have assuredly brought upon his own head the hidden fate that menaced him. The Upas would have made no second mistake! Anything else? I am really horribly tired."

"How can you establish Stacey Hambro's innocence?"

"If you will open that drawer you will find full notes on my forthcoming book, 'The Nether Steeps.' Its fourth chapter is devoted to the extermination of pestilent secret fraternities. That section treats of the clever rooting-up, three months ago, of the once-dreaded Society of the Upas. There are no fewer than forty-five of its most prominent members now in prison. That one or more of them will accept alleviation of sentence by speaking the entire truth of the murder of the supposed Lionel Hambro I have but little doubt. That it will be an enormous relief to that gentleman to know that he is henceforth safe from his enemies goes without saying. He will certainly act very handsomely toward Stacey. Perhaps he will give him half the property. I hope he will. He ought to—Good night, my dear Francie. Good night."

(Copyright, 1920.)

The Withered Flowers By Binet-Valmer

(Translated from the French by William L. McPherson.)

IT WAS raining, and the wind was blowing hard. The squall beat against the ruined walls of the church and leaves fell in heaps on the graves below. The cemeteries of the Ourre have a sadder air than the cemeteries of the Aisne. They are four years old.

I am speaking of a cemetery which is near a still unreconstructed church. There are monuments there, chiseled tombstones, crowns and inscriptions, most of which prove how difficult it is to express appropriately the sense of grief. There are some graves without markings or decorations. The fields near by the cemetery are cultivated. The hamlet is full of life. The peasants pursue their toil. They have rebuilt their homes, but they haven't rebuilt their church. Perhaps they don't want to forget?

"Madame! Mademoiselle! Get up; try to pull yourself together." She was stretched out across a pathway, her head against a plot railing. The rain fell in torrents on the poor creature—the poor black thing.

It is a distressing spectacle—a woman fainting in a cemetery.

I took her in my arms and carried her to shelter within the church. The wind tossed her wrap over her head. The rain blinded me. I didn't see her face.

"Madame! Mademoiselle!"

"What is it?"

"You lost consciousness. I picked you up."

She opened her eyes. Later I saw that she was very homely, excessively thin; her cheek bones standing out, her forehead bulging. She had an unhealthy appearance, a yellow complexion and hair without a suggestion of posity. But at that moment there was a certain posity in her expression.

"I beg your pardon, monsieur. My mind is a blank. Where am I? Ah! It's the church in the cemetery. My poor lost ones!"

She was very young—not more than twenty. I thought: "She is already a widow." Again she said:

"My poor lost ones!"

"Your brothers?"

"No, my fiancé and the others."

I had carried her into what remained of the sacristy. I rolled up my coat to make her a pillow.

"Tell me what happened to you."

"I want to go home."

That wasn't possible. She was too weak.

"Wait until the shower is over."

"Who are you?"

"A soldier, an officer. I came to pray at the grave of one of my men."

"What was his name?"

I told her the name. She answered:

"I didn't know him. I was praying at the grave of the four chasseurs—at the big grave, you know."

"I do. There is a single stone with four names on it."

"They were buried together, just as they lived together. One of them was my fiancé, and the other three were engaged to my three girl friends. We had known one another since childhood. We were from the same village. We were to be married the same year. Then the war came. Helene, Renee, Marie and I accompanied them to the station. Two months afterward all were dead, and all

four of us were left widows before we had even married.

"We set out from our village to recover their bodies. We searched this part of the country until we found them. We paid for the monument. Their relatives remained down there, in the Jura. We couldn't return. It was too far away from them. The other girls loved them then as I love them still. I have nothing against my three companions. They, too—the dead—have nothing against them. They understand."

"At first we remained together. We worked for a living in Paris. Helene was a saleswoman, Renee a lady's maid. Marie, who had a little money, learned to write on a typewriter. I made hats. We came here every week. We brought flowers. We wept. We were loyal. But the springtime changed things. Helene is pretty. Renee is a beauty. Marie is a striking blond. They have forgotten. Not all at once. Each month they accompanied me at least once, but I saw that they did it grudgingly. They were accomplishing a duty. They no longer came because they couldn't stay away. Afterward they came because they were ashamed not to come. I kept saying, 'You can't desert them.'"

"But one day Helene answered, 'Oh, you bore me.' It was in May and the lilacs were in bloom. I told Renee and Marie. They took my side and all that summer we three came, making excuses to Jacques, whom Helene had abandoned. The next winter Renee suffered greatly from the cold. She told me, 'I can't go with you any longer.' Neither Marie or I blamed her; but we asked Pierre to pardon her."

"The Gothas and the Zeppelins bombarded Paris. Marie is timid. She went home to the Jura and found another fiancé; so I had to ask Francois to forgive her. Perhaps they envied Pierre, to whom I shall never be false. You understand. I am homely. He loved me in spite of that, and he was the handsomest of them all. Our four friends! They went away singing. I am going to rejoice them. But life is long."

"You found me in the pathway. I thought I should never wake up. For an hour I had talked to them. I called to them, 'Where are you? I am not much of a believer and I haven't even this consolation, I don't know where they are. I live alone. Helene and Renee don't want to know me any longer. To them I wouldn't be a figure of remorse. Marie doesn't like to me and my family say that I am a fool to stay on here in Paris, where I can't make a living. That is true. I don't eat every day. And this week I couldn't bring them any flowers.'"

She hid her face with her arm. Her sleeve was almost worn through at the elbow.

Ah, cemeteries of our great battles. What a setting you furnish for dramas more human than any the poets have ever invented! "The dead go quickly," said Lafargue. Poor dead and poor shriveled flowers! There is so much springtime in the life of a young girl!

"And your comrade, monsieur, did you love him well?"

The rain had ceased, swept away by the gale. I told her the story of my little soldier. The poor girl told me the story of the four little chasseurs.

"Thank you," she cried. "We women—one can never tell. You men are better than we are."

Then she got to her feet. She is really

homely. I went with her to the station. I accompanied her to Paris. I took her address. But when I went to see her I didn't find her. She was at the hospital. Afterward I visited her there.

"Well, you have been sick?"

"I hope—"

And her glance seemed to travel toward the distant cemetery.

Then she fumbled under her pillow and drew out a humble purse.

"It's all that I have left, and it's for them."

That is why four chasseurs, resting in a single grave, receive a visit from me as often as I can make one—in a cemetery in the suburbs of Paris, where the heroes of the first victory of the Marne sleep.

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'Ikky Comes Along.

(Continued from Third Page.)

Auntie, "I might use the same expressions—if I knew how."

"Hip, hip, for Auntie!" I sings out.

"And as for your not knowin' how, that easy fixed Ikky-boy and I will give you lessons."

And say, after he'd finished his play and was about ready to be tucked into his crib, what does the young jollier do but climb up in Auntie's lap and cuddle down folksy, all on his own motion.

"Do you like your old Auntie, Richard?" she asks, smoothin' his red curls 'entle.

"Uh-huh," says Ikky-boy, blinkin' up at her mushy. "Oh's a swell Auntie."

Are we back in the will again? I'll guess we are.

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Shifting the Scenery.

SIR HARRY LAUDER golfs with more enthusiasm than skill, and one day on the links he was in unusually bad form.

At the fourth hole Sir Harry lodged an unusually large sod. The sod rose up into the air and sailed like a great bird down the wind, and Sir Harry's caddy, watching it, said to his companion:

"Did you tell me that guy was an actor, Pete?"

"Sure, Bill," said the other caddy, a note of apology in his voice. "An actor—that's what they call him."

The first caddy took a thoughtful chew of tobacco.

"I'd call him a scene shifter," he said.

The Poet's Difficulty.

PROF. BRANDER MATTHEWS said at a Columbia tea:

"The mathematical mind can't appreciate poetry. You remember the mathematician who began Tennyson's stirring 'Half a league, half a league, half a league'—and then put down the volume contemptuously, muttering:

"If the fellow means a league and a half why can't he say so?"

"Another mathematician listened to a minor poet reciting one of his own songs—a song that said the poet's body was in the office, but his soul was in the country, communing with nature."

"Asked afterward what he thought of the song, the mathematician said: 'Well, that poet isn't the first one who couldn't keep body and soul together.'"